

Omens

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Summary: I was born to meet you. (Bishamon meets Kazuma during his human life. AU. Gen. No spoilers.)

Omens

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The human catches her eye as she descends from the mountains. Brown hair and green eyes, he looks unlike any of the other villagers who worship in the temple. He keeps his head down and his eyes lowered, and the humans around him give him a wide berth; some glare while others visibly flinch as they pass by him. She is a foreign god not yet recognized by heaven, and so to her differences like these matter.

(The old cleric frowns and shakes her head disapprovingly, and Vaisravana lifts her eyes and focuses back onto the horizon, and the swirling storm gathering in front of them.)

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The second time she sees him, he's kneeling at her temple.

His hair is covered with a pale scarf. Unlike the others, he isn't praying. There are no wishes in his heart to answer, and as she steps closer she sees a darkened shadow along the line of his collarbone.

Vaisravana frowns. Around her, supplicants worship silently, praying for strength and glory in battle. She hears their wishes like the tinkling of bells, but she is puzzled by this human's silence.

She is about to leave when the human looks up; their eyes meet. Green eyes, startling in their clarity. She expects that he is looking past her, that she is blended into the background and that the human is simply lost in thought. But then he blushes shyly and quickly looks away.

Vaisravana steps closer. She is close to invading his personal space, but the human hunches into himself, his eyes fixed on a neutral spot on the floor.

"You can see me," she says. It isn't a question. The human lifts his eyes hesitantly. "Why are you here if you have no wishes?"

His eyes flick upward, before falling back down to the cobblestones in front of him: "I haven't thought of one."

"Oh?" Vaisravana frowns, suddenly losing interest. She straightens, tucking her hands into her sleeves and turning her back toward him.

"Perhaps you should visit the shrine of the god Ebisu. He is a lucky god. Perhaps by then you will have thought of a wish for him to grant you."

She walks away as the human stares heatedly at the floor.

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The third time she sees the human, it is night time. A foreign god has no safe haven in heaven, and so she spends the night on temple grounds, shielded from the threat of wandering phantoms or sudden storms.

It is late. The moon hangs above them like a silver coin, and the night around her is still and silent. Her footsteps echo quietly in cool night, and as she crosses into the temple threshold she's surprised to see the human kneeling there.

Once again, his hair is covered by that pale scarf, and beneath his sleeves she can see the beginnings of welts on his arms, and the telltale dark of fresh bruises. Wordlessly, he shifts to allow her space to pray by the alter, and she once again confirms that he can see her. She kneels, clapping her hands and looking up as if in prayer.

He's skittish. Quietly he stands, tucking his hands together, before offering a short bow and leaving. He's about to leave the temple grounds when he stops. His eyes widen imperceptibly as he stands face-to-face with a phantom loitering just outside the grounds.

Vaisravana stands. The human should be safe if he stays within the confines of the temple, but quietly she calls her shinki's name - a knife with a slim blade, hidden discreetly beneath her sleeves, and waits, expecting the human to step forward.

But the human doesn't. He takes a step back, then another. His eyes

are wide and his face is pale.

Vaisravana glances at him, then sighs. The phantom, while not strong, is still a menace. She palms her shinki in her hand and decisively walks forward.

"Miss." He grabs her by the wrist. "I- I'm sorry. But you shouldn't go out there right now."

Vaisravana raises an eyebrow. "Why?"

"It...it is late. You'd be safer if you stayed here."

He's staring at the phantom. She can feel the human's fear.

He's still gripping her wrist as if his life depended on it, and it's not until the phantom whines and shuffles away that he loosens his grip around her hand.

"You can see them," she says.

"I-"

"You saw that phantom," she says. He hesitates a moment, then nods quietly.

"I've never met a human who can see phantoms," she says.

"I've never met anyone else who could see them, either," he says. He lifts his eyes again, the green of his irises like fractured crystal.

"Why do you come here?" she asks. "Is it to escape from phantoms?"

"No," he says, and he hesitates. "I feel safe here," he says, finally.

"Safe?" she asks. He nods.

"I feel an affinity here." He looks up at the shrine again, at the large arch and the stone steps above them. "Bishamonten is a foreign god who traces his lineage back to India. To think that a foreign god can get a foothold here..." his voice drifts. Wistful. Serious. "It makes me feel not as alone."

"Because you are different?" she asks.

"Yes," he says. And then, a confession: "I don't know why I'm telling you this."

"Perhaps because you and I share an affinity," Vaisravana says, and she straightens.

"You do not have a wish, but I promise you now, you have the god Vaisravana's protection. You've been here often enough."

"You have the ear of the gods?" he says. She smiles.

"I have the ear of more than that," she says, smiling.

"I don't often talk to people like this," he says. He smiles shyly.
"I suppose I do feel an affinity toward you."

"You don't have friends or family to speak to?"

"No." He smiles again and she thinks he looks sad.

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He does not come back to the temple.

She ascends. The eagle's wings flap, lifting higher before soaring on the current, and she looks out across the village, searching for him. Eight days and eight nights have passed, and without prayers she cannot track him.

Night falls. At the horizon, she can see the purple haze of a rising storm, and she calls her shinki to battle, flying toward it. The village below her is engulfed in a purple haze, and the humans are howling and crying, caught up in it. _Perhaps my human is here_, she thinks, and she calls a name and lifts her sword.

"_Master. Why are you going out of your way to find this human?_" The old cleric's voice rings in her ear. "_Those eyes of his are ill omens. He was cursed at the moment of his birth._"

"Nonsense," Vaisravana says. "I've already granted him my protection. What kind of god would I be if I failed him?"

"_He hasn't wished it. You won't find him if he doesn't offer you a prayer._"

It starts to rain. Phantoms fall around her like leaves but she still can't find the human. The eagle dives through the night-dark clouds, its shadow skimming through the tops of trees. Thunder crashes and icy rain prickles at her skin.

Someone help me.

The eagle rears back. It's a wish - _his_ wish - and through the rain, Vaisravana dives toward him.

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The fourth time she sees him, Vaisravana's eyes widen.

His body is mangled. His hair, which is normally covered by that pale scarf, is matted and exposed, and his arms are lashed behind his back. There is a gash across his chest and both his legs are broken. He had been attacked because he could see phantoms. Because the humans around him were threatened by him. _They blamed him_, she realizes, and she looks out with regret at the haze of the storm.

Vaisravana steps forward. She knows what the human sees: a radiant

glow around a woman's figure, rays of light emanating around her. Quietly she kneels and places a hand to his brow.

"I'm sorry, human. I just now received your wish."

His breathing is ragged. Shallow. He looks up at her with bright green eyes.

"Please," he says. His voice is cracked. "Please don't leave me."

"I won't."

"I'm frightened," he says. "I don't want to die alone."

"You won't," she says, and she tenderly strokes his brow.

He blinks. Tears fill his eyes, which start to spill over.

There is little she can do to comfort him. Behind her, her shinki look on silently as she crawls toward him on her knees and rests his head onto her lap. She cradles him until the life bleeds out of his body. Slowly, his eyes grow dull and start to lose focus. In her arms, his body grows quiet and still.

The rain lessens. There is a faint glow to the right of her, and Vaisravana lifts her eyes to see the human's spirit standing by his body. The outline is faint; she can see only the brown of his hair and the tops of his shoulders, the rest of his body faded into the darkness of the forest behind him. Gently, she lifts his head off her lap and lays it onto the ground, before standing up, lifting her fingers into a halberd and looking at the spirit in front of her.

She names him "Kazu," after omens, and he turns into a nail that sharply pierces her.

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The memories crash into her like a flood. She finally understands his wish to find someplace where he belongs.

So she gives it to him. She was unable to answer his prayers during his life, and though he does not remember it, she seeks to rectify this. "_Master. Chouki is a nail. He cannot even draw a borderline. He will only be a burden._"

"Oh, there's nothing for that but practice," Vaisravana says lightly, and she can feel the old cleric's mouth stiffen, but she does not let that sway her. Her human will no longer feel so alone.

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It's been centuries since that first meeting in the temple, and she feels that slight frisson of happiness when he sees her.

"Kazuma," she says, and his eyes light up. She sits beside him and

leans against his arm.

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file.